

The National Alcohol Program

—A Vital Component of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration

□When the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA) came into being 2 years ago, its origin and organization reflected dynamics that had been taking place over several years in the fields of alcoholism and drug abuse.

□Less than a decade ago, the alcohol and drug programs in the National Institute of Mental Health both grew rapidly in budget and responsibilities, responding on one hand to a long-standing and serious problem that had been to a large extent ignored and, on the other, to a sudden bursting on the scene of widespread experimentation and use of illegal drugs, from marijuana to heroin.

□Establishment of ADAMHA was recognition of the independent needs and purposes of the three programs now administered by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Mental Health—three separate and equal Institutes which collaborate and coordinate their programs within the parent Administration.

□From the standpoint of Federal support, the alcohol program is the youngest of the three. It deals with an age-old problem that is huge in scope. Alcoholism or problem drinking today afflicts an estimated 9 million Americans, and directly or indirectly affects another 36 million persons in the United States. Alcohol-related problems are the cause of more than 85,000 deaths in the United States each year, including almost half of the more than 50,000 persons killed annually in highway accidents. The

total economic loss to the nation from alcohol problems is an estimated \$25 billion annually.

□In its programs to reduce this enormous toll, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has projected two principal goals. The most immediate is to assist in making the best alcoholism treatment and rehabilitation services available at the community level. The longer range goal is to develop effective methods of preventing alcoholism and problem drinking. To achieve these objectives, the NIAAA fosters, develops, conducts, and supports broad programs in research, training, development of community services, and public education.

□Because alcohol problems impinge and interfere in every sector of society, the Institute encourages collaborative efforts to deal with the problems wherever they arise. It is currently funding a 3-year project to expand alcohol information programs throughout the country and set them up where none presently exist, in close cooperation with community leaders.

Another 3-year project will promote the establishment of occupational alcoholism programs in at least 90 major businesses and industries with a total roster of more than a million employees. Occupational programs are among the most successful in the alcoholism field, with recovery rates often exceeding 80 percent.

□And, with the goal of reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by drinking drivers, the NIAAA conducts a major collaborative program with the

National Highway Traffic Administration of the Department of Transportation—a formal collaboration which recalls the interagency collaboration in the form of Philadelphia which resulted in the report entitled "Under the Influence. . ." in this issue of *Health Reports*.



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Cover—The computer prescription is proposed as a possible way to improve the quality of those issued in a pediatric emergency room as well as to improve the compliance of parents in administering medications to children, in the paper beginning on page 402. The authors' findings indicate that emergency pediatric prescriptions are often inadequate in instruction or even confusing.

